

Statement on Signing the Higher Education Amendments of 1992 *July 23, 1992*

Today I am signing into law S. 1150, the "Higher Education Amendments of 1992." It reauthorizes the many programs in the Higher Education Act of 1965. The legislation is broad in scope and significance, encompassing both the Pell Grant and Guaranteed Student Loan programs as well as a variety of other programs to assist students and institutions of higher education. I hope that many middle- and low-income families who dream of a college education for their children will find that this legislation helps to make their dreams reality.

Educator Robert Maynard Hutchins once said: "The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives." I think the key phrase here is "throughout their lives." Our intention is to make it easier for all Americans to pursue postsecondary education and training throughout their lifetimes—whether they are just out of high school or returning to school later in life. The world has changed, and a solid education is critical for all of us to compete effectively in today's global economy and function as responsible citizens in our American democracy.

In pursuing the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965, my Administration was guided by three major principles: improving access to postsecondary education—especially for middle- and low-income students and families; enhancing accountability of all who play a role in postsecondary education programs; and promoting educational excellence. This legislation is not perfect, but it moves in the direction of these principles. It contains a number of valuable program integrity and loan default prevention provisions. In particular, these provisions will crack down on sham schools that have defrauded students and the American taxpayer in the past. The legislation also will take the first steps toward establishing the principle of rewarding academic achievement through the establishment of Presidential Access Scholarships. This is an important first step, and I will work to raise further the academic achieve-

ment standards for this program.

I am particularly gratified that segments of my AMERICA 2000 strategy are part of this legislation. It provides for an alternative certification program by which States will develop new routes to teacher certification. In addition, the legislation authorizes academies for teachers and school leaders to provide these educators with in-service training in academic and other educational areas.

I am also pleased that eligibility for Pell Grants has been provided to students studying for degrees on a less than half-time basis. This provision was part of my "Life-long Learning Act." Providing grants to individuals taking as little as one course at a time toward their degree offers American men and women some of the flexibility they need to improve their employment skills while recognizing their commitments to jobs and families. This provision enables a working mother in a low-wage job to receive financial assistance for courses that would qualify her for a better paying, high-skilled job. It allows education to become the mechanism by which those at the back of the line can move to the front of the line—and realize the American dream.

In addition to the laudable aspects of S. 1150, the legislation unfortunately includes certain constitutionally troublesome provisions relating to reports to the Congress containing legislative recommendations and the use of audit standards established by the Comptroller General. I will construe these provisions to avoid constitutional difficulties and preserve the separation of powers required by the Constitution.

We now have the best system of colleges and universities in the world. As a next step, I would like to see the same excellence at the elementary and secondary school level. To change our country, we must change our schools, and I am pleased that the revolution has started and is spreading. There are 1,500 communities and 44 States committed to the AMERICA 2000 strategy.

My AMERICA 2000 legislation calls for four transforming ideas: (1) a new generation of break-the-mold New American Schools; (2) world class standards and a system of voluntary national exams that measure progress that schools make toward meeting those standards; (3) broad flexibility for teachers and principals to help children achieve greater learning; and (4) parental choice of schools so that middle- and low-income families have more of the same choices of schools for their children that are now the preserve of wealthier families. We cannot afford to accept business-as-usual here in Washington while the country demands change and improvement.

Yesterday, Senator Danforth and Congressman Gradison introduced my “Federal Grants for State and Local ‘GI Bills’ for Children.” It will give middle- and low-income families consumer power—dollars to

spend at any lawfully operating school of their choice—public, private, or religious. Just as the original GI Bill and Pell Grants transformed higher education, the “GI Bills” for Children will help transform elementary and secondary education.

I am pleased to sign the “Higher Education Amendments of 1992.” I look forward to signing the “Federal Grants for State and Local ‘GI Bills’ for Children” in the near future, and I am hopeful we can work together to produce an AMERICA 2000 bill just as we worked together on the bill I am signing today.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
July 23, 1992.

Note: S. 1150, approved July 23, was assigned Public Law No. 102–325.

Remarks on Signing the Higher Education Amendments of 1992 in Annandale, Virginia

July 23, 1992

Please be seated, and thank you very, very much. Dr. Ernst, thank you, sir, for that very nice explanation and that wonderful introduction. Let me say how pleased I am to be here on this campus, be here at this marvelous community college about which I’ve heard so many good things.

I’m delighted to be with Lamar Alexander. I know the Members of Congress here have met him and worked with him, but some of the students here and some of the faculty may not have. In my view, non-partisan view, a purely objective view, Lamar Alexander is really doing a superb job for the Nation’s education, and I’m delighted he’s here.

I want to salute the Members of Congress that came all the way over. Lamar was telling me and our own people in the White House have told me that this was truly a bipartisan effort. The leaders out here today reflect that, and they have stood by education for a long, long time. So I welcome them, salute them, particularly the members

of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, the House Committee, the House Education and Labor Committee.

I also want to salute the members of the NOVA community. It’s a pleasure, as I say, to be here in Virginia, the cradle of American education, and then to sign into law this higher education bill, the Higher Education Amendments of 1992, and help thereby move our schools into the 21st century.

After this is over, we’re going to pass these out to everybody, and then tonight we will have a quiz—[laughter]—on the ingredients therein. But I told Dr. Ernst that I’m impressed with NOVA’s mission, curriculum, and most especially your choice of last year’s commencement speaker—[laughter]—a silver-haired philosopher named Barbara Bush, who still feels honored and delighted.

But there are a couple of things I don’t like to do. You know one, eating broccoli.